

Facets

for
you

SEPTEMBER 2007

Learning at home

More local
families choosing
to homeschool



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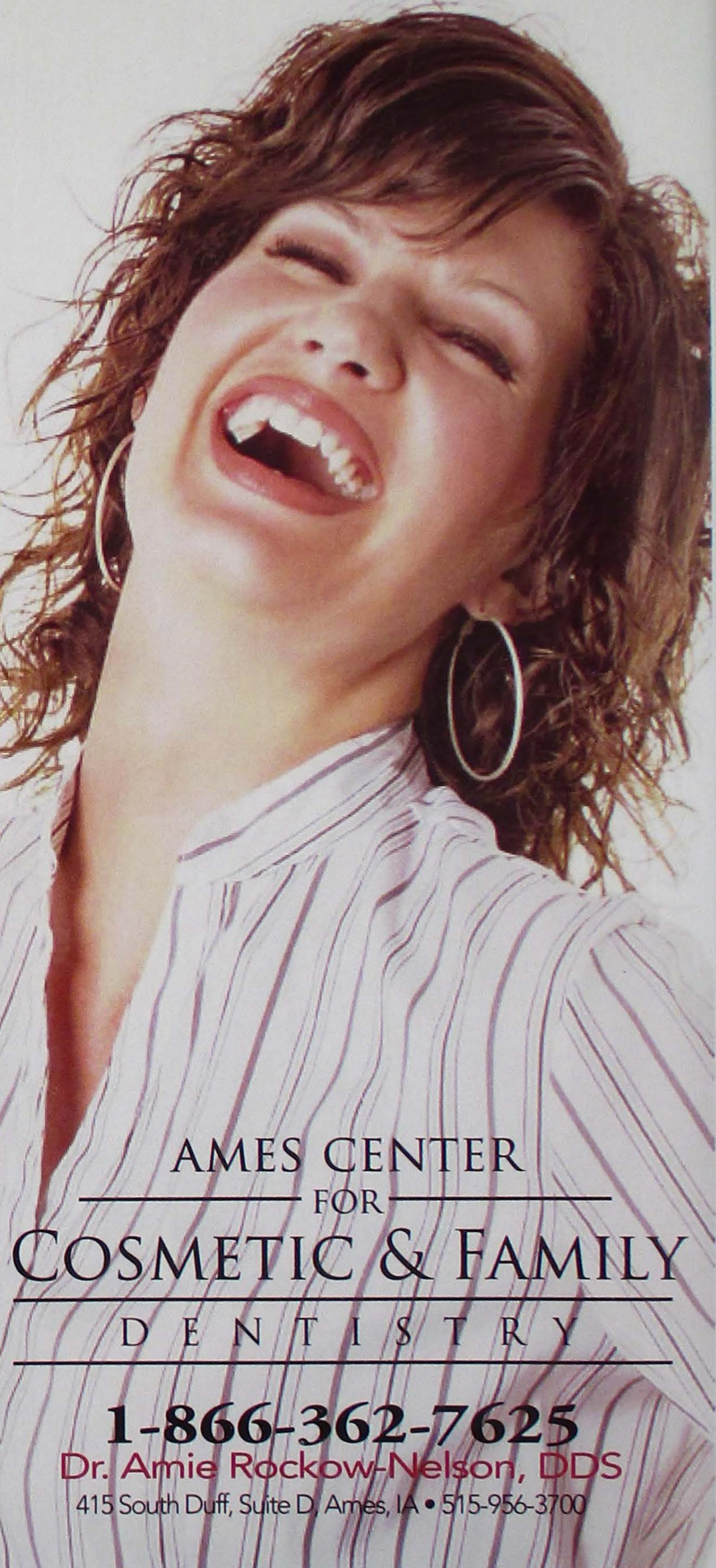


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notes from the newsroom



It's that time of year when even though it might be shorts weather in the afternoon, a person needs to remember a jacket before going out in the evening. Winter is coming, though it's still too far away to worry about; we've got the blissful but brief Iowa season of fall to enjoy first.

Many of us are thinking back-to-school thoughts, either because we've just been to K-mart to haul home yet another load of school supplies for our children, or because we've just started tackling another teaching course load, or just because it takes half again as long to cross town because Iowa State University is back in session.

Facets is joining the back-to-school swing of things, too, with a focus on education this month. We look at why more local families are choosing to homeschool their children and why Dorothy O'Connor has chosen to keep her job teaching rhythms to preschoolers long past retirement age.

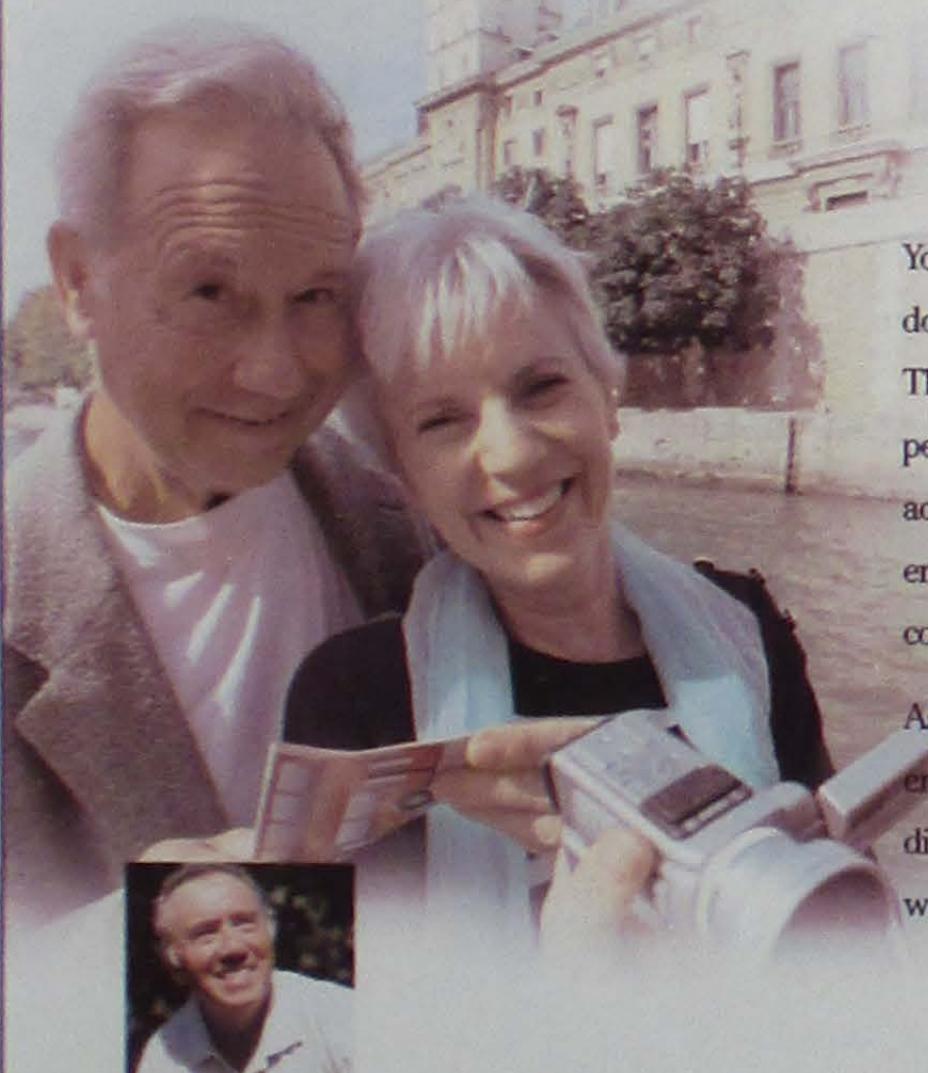
I must admit I always feel a little pang of melancholy in the early fall. During all my school years, from kindergarten through college, I loved the start of a new school year and the possibilities that came with it. Book learning was exciting to me; even if my excitement waned as my bookbag straps frayed toward the end of the year, or as my procrastination led to all-nighters late in the semester, I loved the promise of all the interesting things I would be learning and doing before summer arrived again.

This love of learning is actually what led to my career choice. I couldn't decide on a major because too many topics interested me. But then I realized that journalism was a way to keep on learning; journalists are called on every day to learn something new, and all they have to do is write up an article that tells other people about the interesting things they've heard or read about. This seemed to me to be a fine vocation.

But even if I get to learn every day, there's nothing quite like this time of year to revive an appreciation for learning. So try not to wonder if you see me stocking up on pencils, pens and notebooks; I'm just trying to see if I can take home some of that back-to-school excitement.

— Heidi Marttila-Losure, Facets editor

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Education

Next month:
The arts

WELCOME TO Facets

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Corrections:

Photo credits for the Faceted Woman article in the August issue were inadvertently omitted. The photos of Sara Gatchel were by Images by Ngaire, 233-5447.

A story about housekeeping and homemaking in the August issue of Facets included an error that was introduced in the editing process. Jane Halliburton and Beth Clarke are not related. Facets apologizes for the error.

<p>5 FINANCE Hiring a financial planner</p> <p>6 HOME-SCHOOLING More families choose at-home learning</p> <p>14 'MRS. DOROTHY' She's been teaching rhythms to preschoolers for 45 years</p> <p>16 HAPPY OLD LADY A little help from technology</p> <p>18 FITNESS Get schooled on health</p>	<p>20 PARENTING It just makes sense</p> <p>22 FOOD BITES Bag-lunch savvy</p> <p>23 FACETED WOMAN Tahira Hira</p>
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COVER PHOTO: Dawn Aitchison values the participation of her mother, Elaine Roys, and grandmother, Bessie Roys, in creating a real-time living and learning environment for her children. Here, Bessie and Dawn hold Bethany (3 mos.) while Elaine sits next to Delaney Aitchison (10 years).

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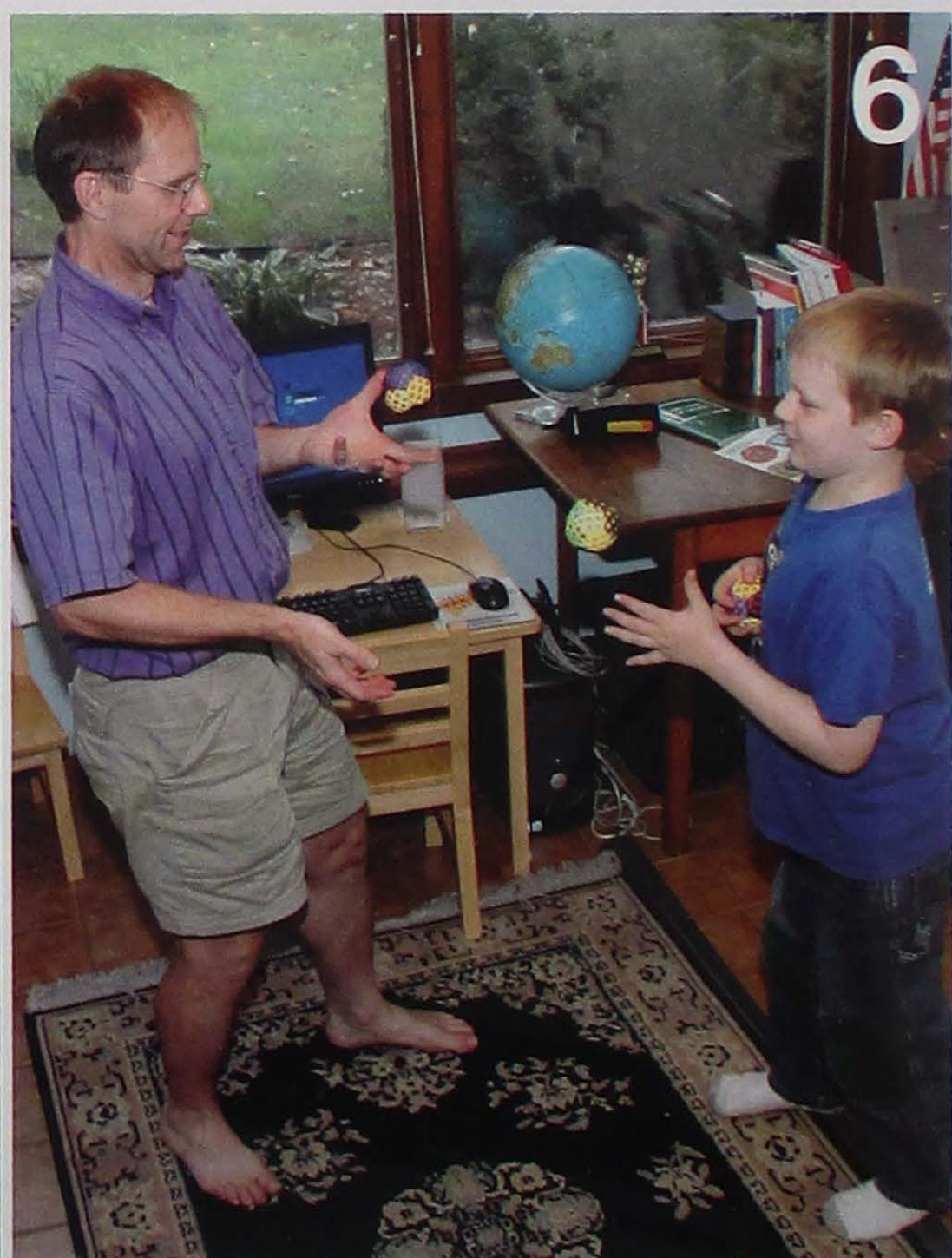


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money smart

It doesn't matter if you are in the market for a car or a pound of tomatoes: If you are smart you examine the merchandise. The same goes for hiring a financial professional.



Hiring a Financial Professional 101

By KAREN PETERSEN,
with TAHIRA HIRA

What is the benefit of a financial planner? Besides the knowledge a planner can provide, he or she can offer perspective and steer you away from emotional decisions.

Also, a regular retirement checkup with an advisor makes you accountable to someone for saving enough. That is worth its weight in gold mutual funds.

Anyone can say he or she is a financial planner. A planner can display a diploma or rewards from his company for being the top sales person, but does he really know about retirement and tax planning? Can she help you determine if you need long-term care insurance and suggest an asset allocation plan for your retirement dollars? Be sure to ask about certification or designations. Newsweek featured a great article in 2006 by Jane Bryant Quinn called "Money Guide: How to Pick a Planner" that went over which certifications to look for and which to avoid. Find it at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11180111/site/newsweek/>.

Meet potential advisors face to face. Most planners offer a free initial consultation. The purpose of this meeting is for you and the planner to learn about each other, not to solve specific problems. Interview at least three pros. This is a person you will rely on to help you reach your personal financial goals. Ask yourself, "Will this advisor take a personal interest in me, or will I just be an account number?"

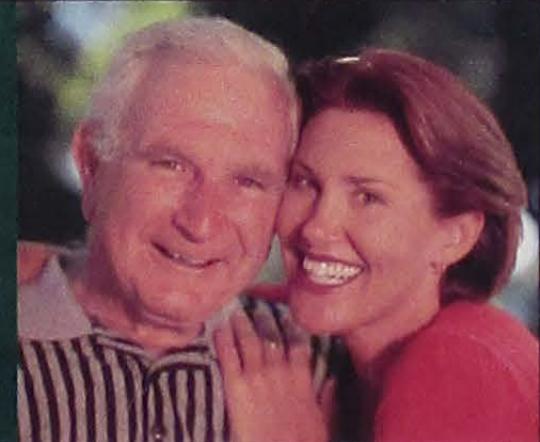
How will you pay for the service? Generally, there are three basic billing structures:

- **Fee-only planners** are paid only for the advice. They do not earn commissions by selling financial products such as life insurance or mutual funds.
- **Fee-based planners** earn fees from advice and they make commissions on some of the products they sell.
- **Commission-based planners** make money from the products they sell.

Be prepared to ask, "What are you selling and who's paying your commissions?" For example, is this person going to get more from selling annuities than bonds? If you have a clear understanding of how a planner earns his living, you can determine if you're getting advice that's in your best interest.

For more information, contact Karen Petersen at Karen@mymorethan-money.net or 232-2785. Karen also invites you to join her series of Money Smart classes, or chose a topic and she will create a class for you and a group of friends.

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Learning in the living room

More Ames and Boone families are choosing to homeschool their children

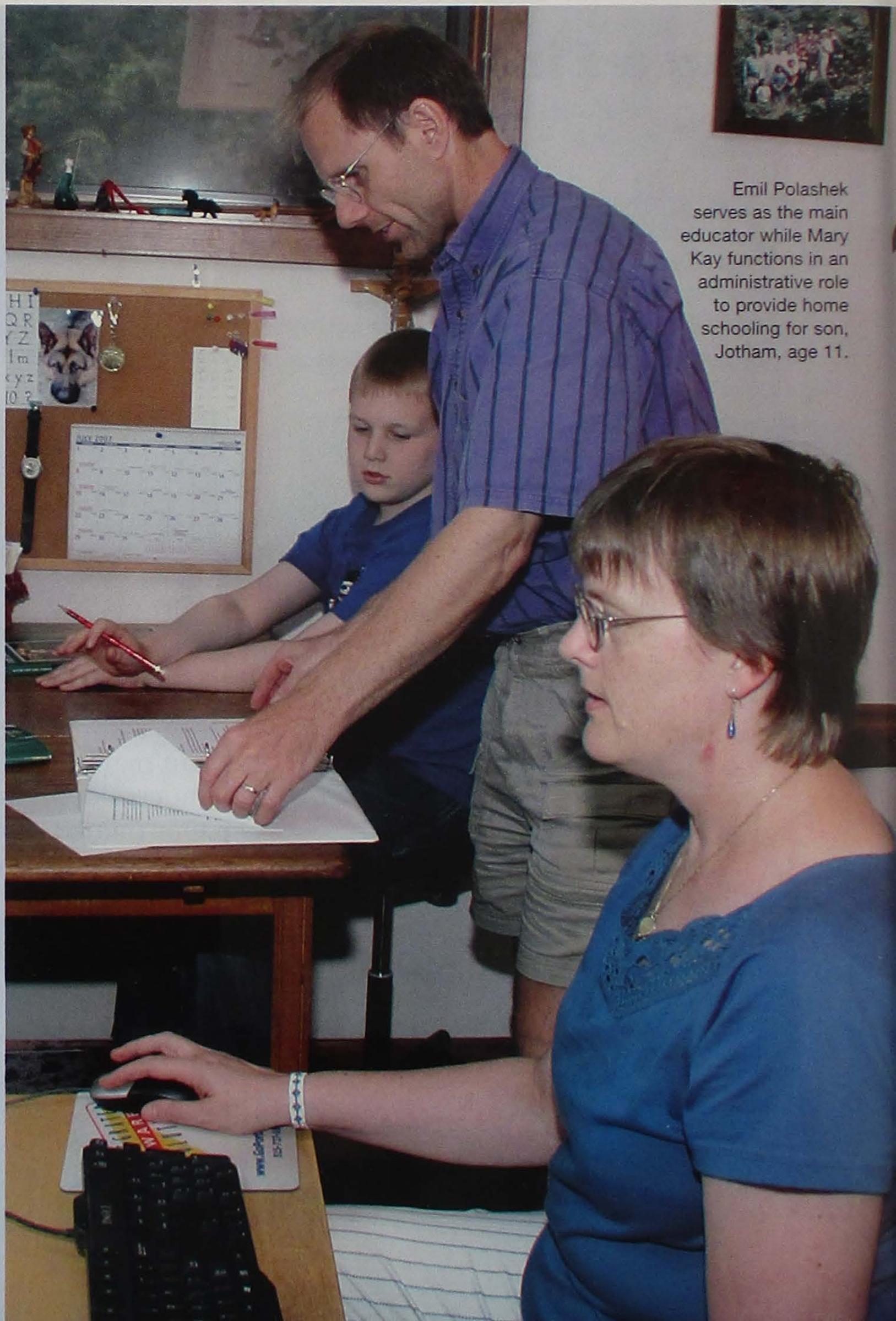
By SUSAN VERNON

Ten-year-old Jotham Polashek is gearing up for the first day of school.

On that day, he will head to the classroom where he and his teacher will spend the bulk of their school year. Jotham's classroom is just five steps down from his family's living room; his teacher is his father, Emil. The Polasheks are part of an increasing number of families choosing homeschooling over traditional methods of education.

By some reports, there are as many as 1.9 million children being homeschooled nationwide and the movement has been gaining steam, growing as much as 15 percent annually over the past decade. Last year, 115 Ames families participated in the Ames Homeschool Assist Program. Another 47 participated in the comparable program in the Boone Community School District. More than 300 children were among the program participants.

What accounts for the rapid growth of a movement almost unheard of a generation ago? Why are parents opting out of public education in a school system known for quality academics? How and why are area school districts responding to the trend by providing programs for home learners? The answers may surprise you.



Emil Polashek serves as the main educator while Mary Kay functions in an administrative role to provide home schooling for son, Jotham, age 11.



Dawn Aitchison reads aloud to her family while Matt and the children play. Reading is a daily occurrence in the Aitchison household.

Why families take the homeschooling plunge

School psychologist Jennifer Williams has worked with children in central Iowa school districts for eight years. She has watched the trend with interest.

"I think the stereotype is that people are dissatisfied with the public school system and homeschool their kids out of frustration," Williams said. "This is a very rare situation and usually does not last long if parents attempt it. More commonly, parents choose to homeschool their children because they want something specific for them, such as an emphasis on spiritual values or to accelerate learning, rather than wanting to

get away from something."

Shelly Larson, coordinator of the Ames Homeschool Assist Program, agrees with that observation.

"Ames' schools are excellent," she said. "They do an excellent job of educating children, but some families feel they want to do the job themselves."

She cites faith as a primary reason many families are homeschooling in this community. In a 1999 study, 38.4 percent of parents nationwide indicated they homeschooled their children for religious reasons.

The Aitchison family of rural Madrid falls into this category. In 2002, Matt and Dawn

Aitchison decided to leave their downtown Ames home and build a house in the country far from distractions.

"We felt called to move away from the hectic 'keeping up with the Joneses' lifestyle," Dawn Aitchison said. "We started looking at how busy parents we knew were, and we didn't want that for our children. At the same time we really started looked at the role religion played in our children's lives."

They pulled their fourth-grader and first-grader out of school in 2003 and took the plunge into homeschooling.

"It had nothing to do with a lack of education," Dawn Aitchison said. "Everything we

teach we can bring back to God and to the teachings of our church."

For other families, the reasons are more academic.

Marti Streeter, the Homeschool Assist Coordinator for Boone Community School District, began homeschooling her own children 18 years ago to provide her kindergartner the personal attention she felt he needed. She says the desire to provide personalized education to a child is very appealing to some parents.

"Students can move on without hindrance," she said. "I have eight children, and not one was the same. They all needed different things educationally."

Several students joined Streeter at the Boone Homeschool Assist Program Center to discuss their experience with homeschooling. They all praised the flexibility and academic benefits of one-on-one education. Ninth-grader Alex Haynes, who said his mother decided to homeschool him because "she saw I thought outside the box and she didn't want to have that squashed," experimented with public school in the fifth grade but decided to return to homeschooling after completing the year.

"I just like it so much better — the personal attention, getting to spend more time on things I want to learn about," Haynes said.

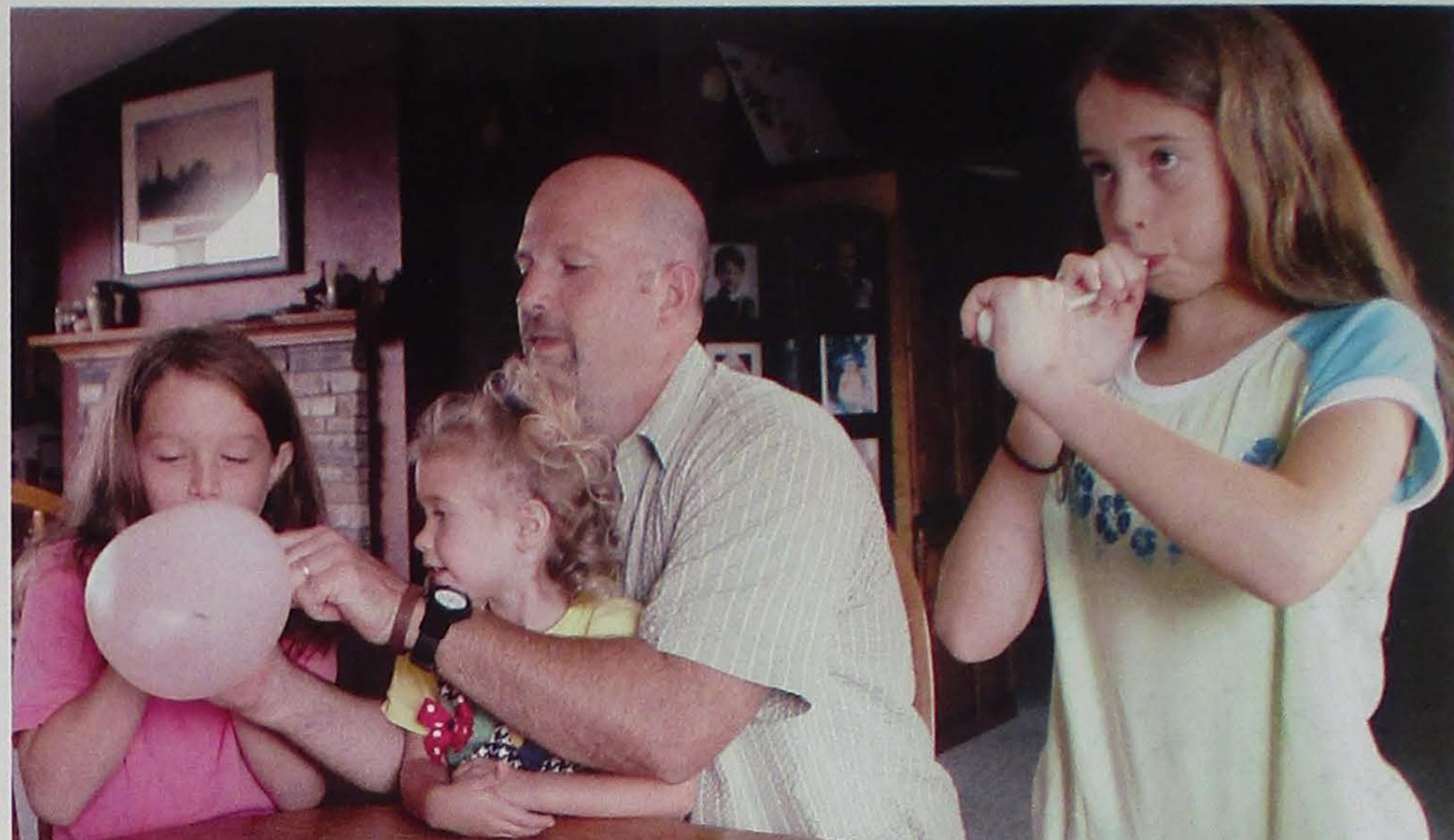
Streeter's son, 12-year-old Alex Melton, said homeschooling suits him for a different reason.

"I like to have everything scheduled for my entire day," Melton said. "My brother doesn't like that at all, and we can both learn how we need to."

"When you are teaching your children yourselves," Streeter said, "you know what you are learning and you can bring it into their daily lives. Sometimes our dinner conversations can be quite extensive."

The Polashek family felt personalized home education was the right fit for their son Jotham. A gifted student, Jotham skipped fourth grade before graduating from St. Cecilia Elementary in the fifth grade at the age of 9. Concerns about placing such a young boy in middle school prompted a decision to homeschool, although both of his older siblings had graduated from Ames High School and his younger sister continues to attend St. Cecilia.

"Academically, we just felt we could give him more here than school," explained his mom, Mary Kay, who is herself a



Matt helps Claire (9), Nora (4) and Delaney (10) recreate an experiment with glue and liquid starch they learned while visiting the Science Center.

public school teacher.

Regardless of the reason behind a decision to homeschool, families see similar benefits to their children.

"You get to spend more time together as a family," Streeter said. "It bonds us. Our kids are so close. They live all over the country now but are still the closest of friends."

Haynes agreed.

"We get to talk about school

Additionally, homeschool families report increased independence in their children.

"The great thing about homeschooling is you can be so self-directed," said Haynes who enjoys the freedom to pursue subjects of interest to him in detail.

Streeter recalls a letter she received from one of her son's college professors.

"He said he knew some-

began homeschooling was that no two families homeschool alike.

"There is no right way to homeschool," she said.

The law allows families multiple options including working with supervising teachers for extra support, having a parent certified as a teacher or testing children annually. Though most area parents choose to use the services of a supervising teacher, the way their homeschooled operate are all unique.

Aitchison prefers a relaxed approach to education. "We don't want our home school to look like school at home," she said. "We want it to look different. It should look different."

Most of the time the Aitchison children (there are seven now) can be found sprawled out all over the house reading or completing hands-on projects with their grandparents or parents.

"We get to do a lot of really awesome stuff," said 13-year-old Lucas.

The Aitchisons believe in utilizing human resources to enhance their children's education.

"I just like it so much better — the personal attention, getting to spend more time on things I want to learn about."

— Alex Haynes

with our siblings in ways other siblings don't, and it's not uncool to talk to younger kids or older kids."

"I really like the relationships between my kids," Aitchison said. "I really know my kids ... The kids have a lot of time with their grandparents, too. Both sets of grandparents can be involved in our children's education."

thing was different right away because he didn't have to spoon-feed him and when he learned he was homeschooled it all made sense," she said. "He was thanking me for doing a good job educating my son."

'There's no right way to homeschool'

One of the first lessons Aitchison learned when she

"I may not know all the answers, but I know how to help them find the answers," Aitchison said. "If they are interested in something, I encourage them to find someone who can teach them about that subject."

The Polasheks prefer to use online educational programs and programs offered through the Ames Community School System to educate Jotham. He has his own learning space, and his family pays for online courses in topics such as writing, Latin, and classical literature. Mom serves as "principal," preparing detailed schedules on the weekends and doling out homework. Dad is the teacher, providing support, guidance, and sometimes a little prodding during the day and driving

Jotham to classes at Crawford School. Both Polasheks work full-time with Emil completing much of his work from home to

can be flexible, and they are working part-time and still homeschooling," Streeter said.

"We get to do a lot of really awesome stuff."

— 13-year-old Lucas Aitchison

make homeschooling possible.

Streeter reports this is one of the biggest changes she has seen in the homeschooling movement over the years: More and more two-income families are finding ways to make homeschooling work for them.

"Younger moms especially are realizing homeschooling

Public schools are still in the picture

Another major change taking place in homeschooling comes in the form of public school support.

Boone staffs eight part-time teachers and a homeschool coordinator to assist home-school families and offers cours-

es to children four months of the year in subjects such as art and public speaking.

Ames staffs 10 teachers (most of them part-time) and a coordinator and offers courses at Crawford School throughout the school year in subjects such as art, public speaking, computers, and physical education.

Both districts offer ICN programs, guest speakers and library resources to families.

"It's amazing how bountiful the options in the Ames schools are," Emil Polashek said.

Jotham agreed: "The hardest part is choosing."

The Homeschool Assist Program has been the subject of controversy and misunderstanding in Ames over the years. Larson stresses that "the program is not parasitic." Funds the district receives from the state for homeschoolers would not be allocated to the district without the homeschoolers. The homeschool program brings about \$600,000 into the Ames School District each year, and only \$350,000 of that money goes directly to the education of those students, Larson said.

"It's really a win-win for everyone," Streeter said. "The districts benefit financially, and the homeschoolers benefit from the programs that bridge the gap between home and school."

One major benefit to the homeschool assist programs is that they provide a way to meet the socialization needs of homeschooled children.

"When the choice to home school is made, parents may want to consider how their children will develop successful social skills as an adult," Williams said. "Some of the most successful homeschooling situations I've seen involve students who participate in extracurricular activities at school or specialized classes that benefit from group participation such as foreign language."



Alex Haynes (14), Jacob Melton (8) and Alex Melton (12) work at building structures and relationships in the Home School Assist Library while director Marti Streeter takes a call from a new client.

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According to Larson and Streeter, many homeschoolers participate in extra-curricular activities, some of which are based in the homeschool program, others within the public system.

Haynes belongs to a Lego club and participates in speech and debate with fellow homeschoolers and plays in the public school band. Streeter's sons have been active in sports at Boone High School. The Aitchison children are involved in 4-H and church youth groups, and their daughters are looking forward to dance classes in the fall.

All the families we spoke to agreed the image of the socially awkward homeschool child was a myth.

"We are not any different," said Streeter's son, 12-year-old Alex Melton. "We have a lot of friends."

Jotham Polashek agreed. "I thought homeschool would be really lonely, but it's not lonely at all."

In fact, Larson said, homeschooled children she has met seem to have exceptional social skills: "They consistently work with all age levels rather than a homogenous age group."

Streeter agreed. "They can go into almost any social situation and feel comfortable talking to anyone," she said.

Psychologist Williams sees truth in their observations.

"In my experience, children who are successful in a homeschool environment also thrive in any opportunities their parents provide for additional social and emotional development," she said. "It is a myth that children who are homeschooled lack social skills; children with high academic abilities typically have strong social and emotional skills that can be easily developed through community opportunities their parents provide."

Answering the skeptics

For all the professed benefits

of homeschooling, there are still those who question whether a parent can educate his/her child at home as well as the school system can.

Streeter says the proof is in the pudding. She tells tales of area homeschool graduates who work for NASA and large publishing houses in New York City. She speaks of her own children, including a successful civil engineer, a businessman, a law student and two nursing students.

The statistics back up her assertions. Homeschooled students attend college at a rate comparable to traditionally schooled children and achieve similar measures of academic success. What is significant is the way homeschooled adults remember their education. In a recent study of homeschooled adults, 94 percent indicated being homeschooled had made them more independent persons and 79 percent indicated that being homeschooled had helped them interact with people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Streeter said she is beginning to see second-generation homeschoolers. She believes the growth of homeschooling is likely to continue.

"We must be doing something right," she said with a smile.

As parents all over the country were busily checking school supply lists and packing backpacks for that magic August day when school buses would again roll down their streets, Polashek and Aitchison took the time to reflect on the educational choices they have made for their children.

"It's a very different world I am glad we went into," Polashek said. "I would highly recommend it to anyone."

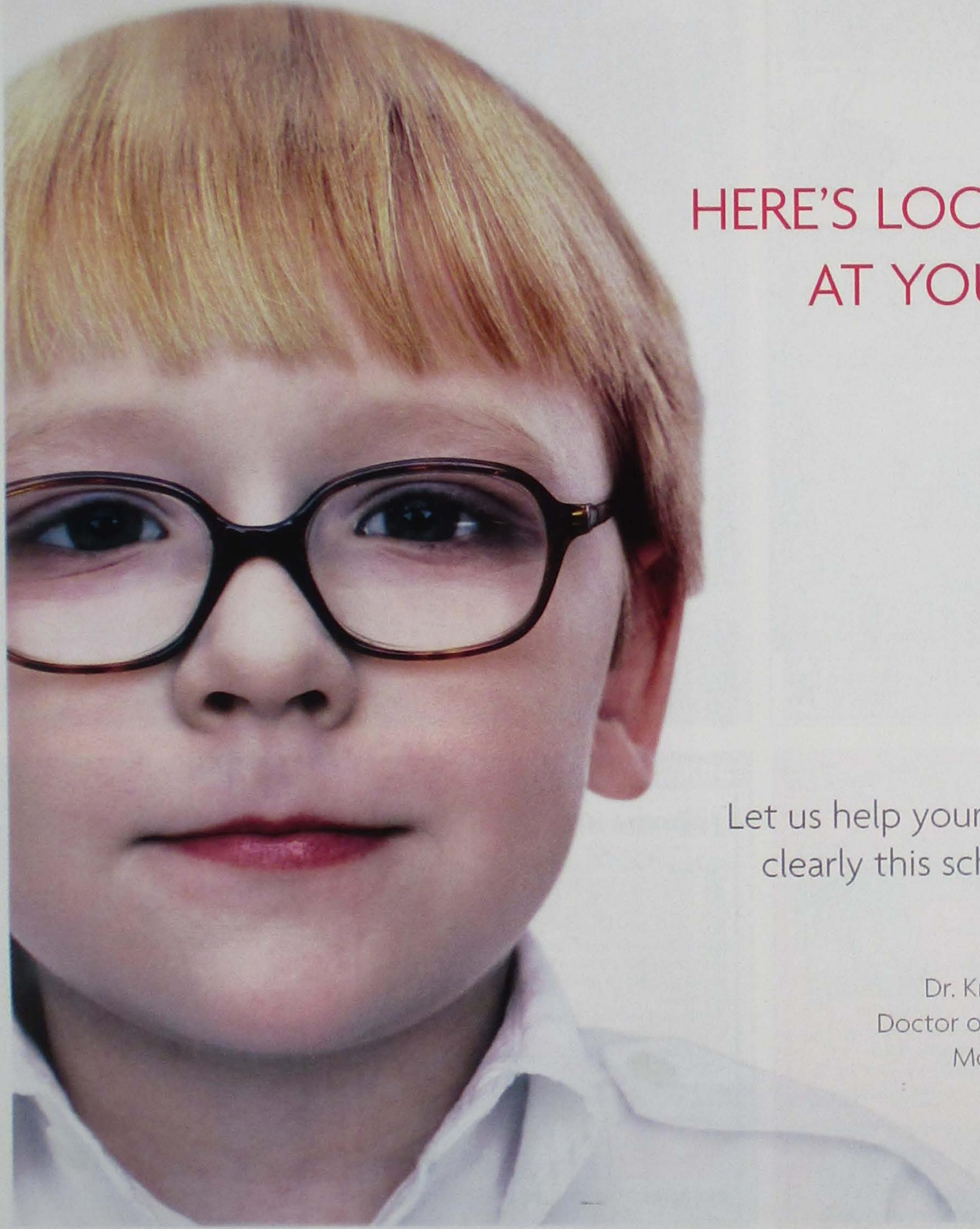
"I won't say it's always been easy," Aitchison said. "But it's a decision we will never regret."



— Susan Vernon,
a freelance writer from
Ames. She can be
reached at
smvernon@mchsi.com.



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A close-up, slightly angled portrait of a young boy with light brown hair and bangs. He is wearing dark-rimmed glasses and a white collared shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

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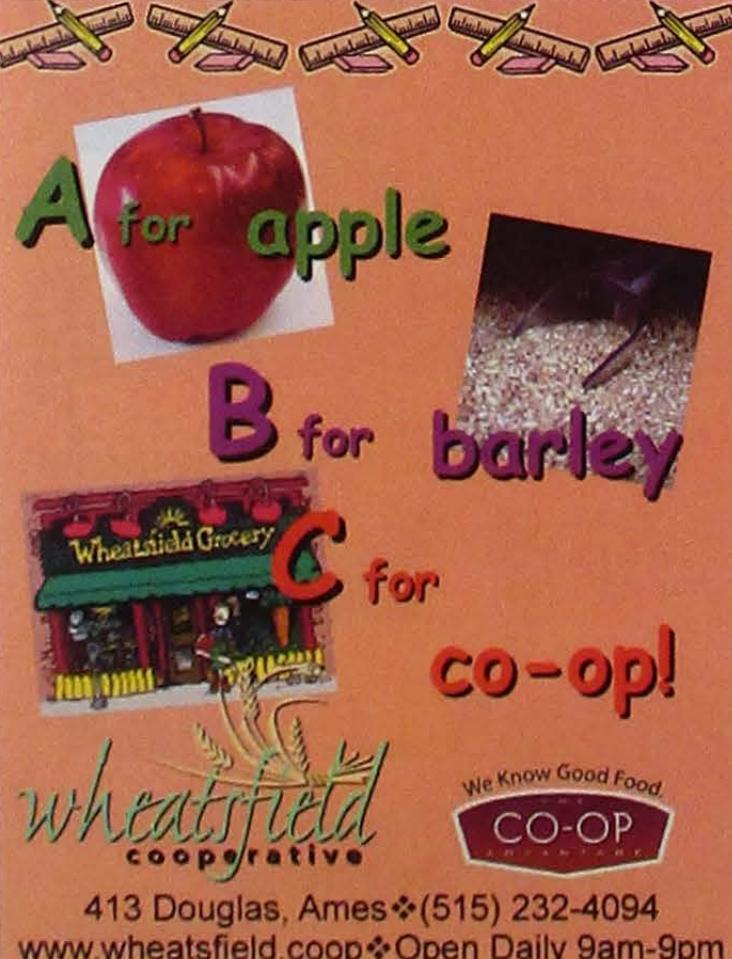
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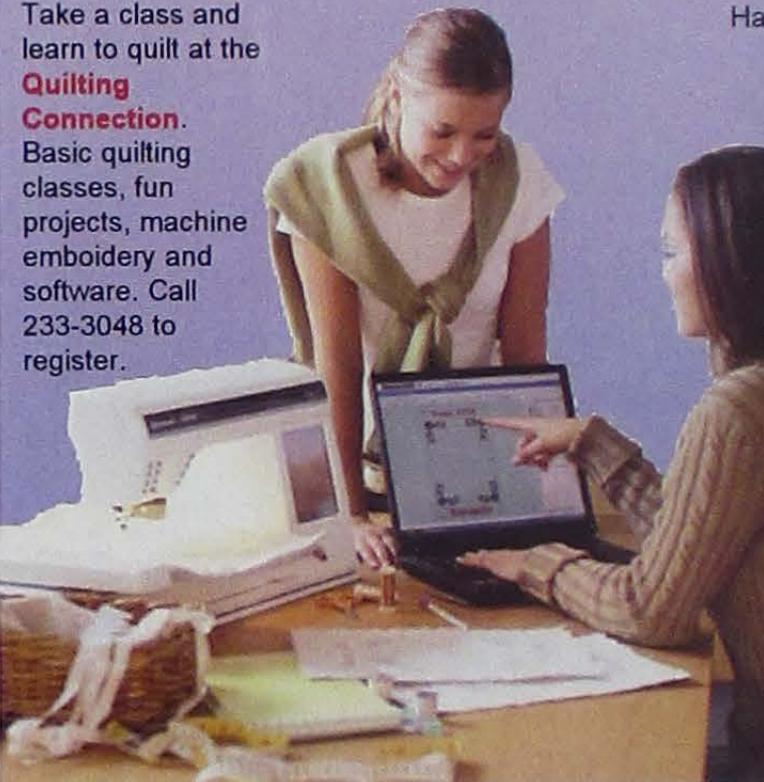
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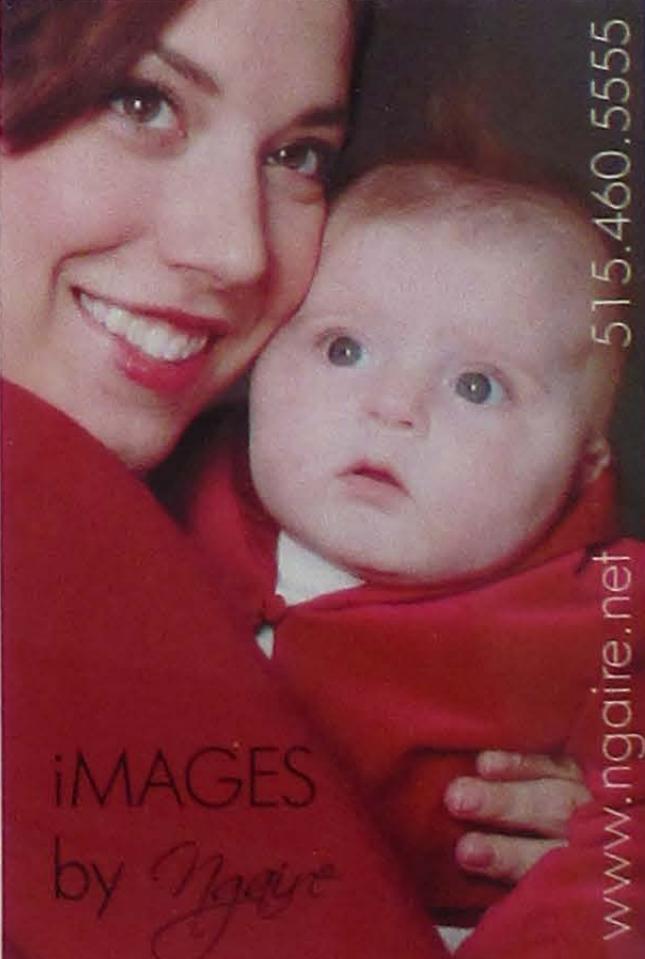
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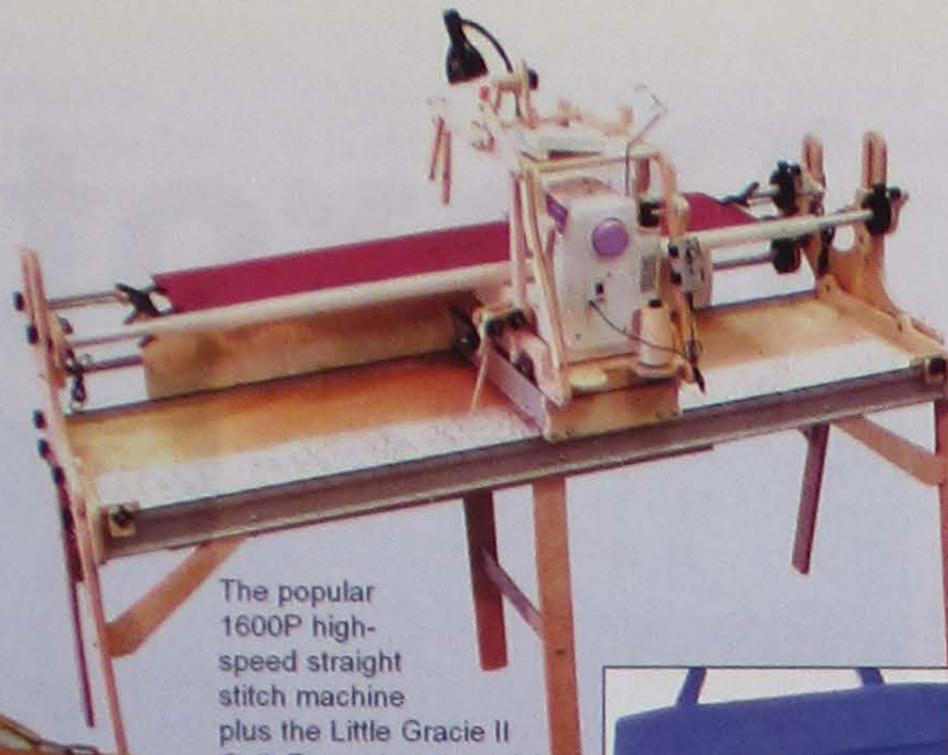
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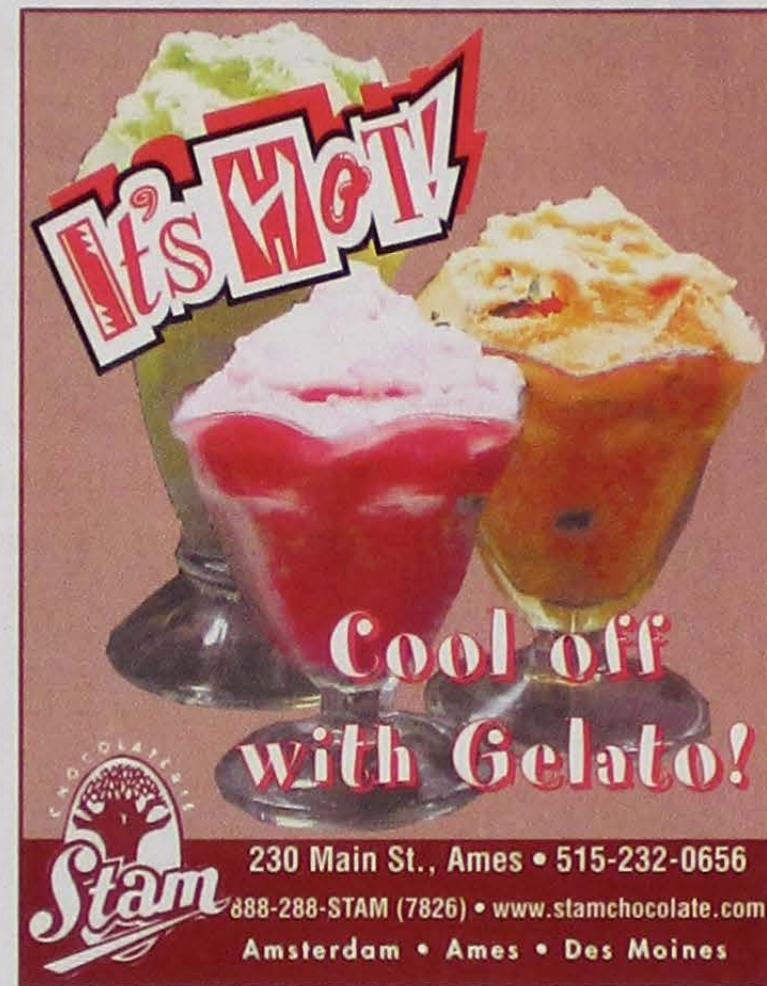
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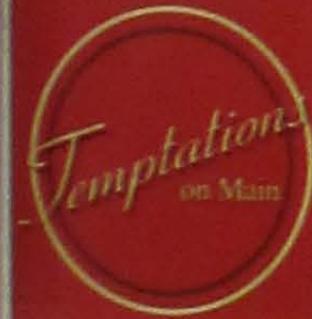


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'Mrs. Dorothy'

For 45 years, this Ames woman has been teaching preschoolers to feel the beat

By HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

There's a predictable rhythm that happens every other Thursday at Treetop Preschool in Ames.

"Mrs. Dorothy's here!" one of the children screams.

And in walks Dorothy O'Connor, a woman with a friendly smile who is not much taller than the children who gather around her and give her a hug or two as she arrives.

Then the learning begins. As O'Connor plays piano, the children march, run, gallop and clap. They work up to skills like skipping and a move O'Connor, 84, calls "step together, jump," in which the children learn not only the stepping together and the jumping but the all-important skill of holding still between the two. Lately she's been teaching them the chicken dance, which the children love. (Though they don't go as fast as they do at weddings, O'Connor said.) And they do make-believe: they stretch their necks like giraffes, or they hop like grasshoppers.

"At the end I usually ask them if they want to be a bird, a bee or a butterfly," O'Connor said. "Then they put out their wings and fly."



Dorothy O'Connor plays music and watches children march in a circle at Treetop Preschool.

By Jon Britton

O'Connor has been teaching in this same building since her daughter was 5 — and her daughter will be "50 this year, and I just can't believe it," O'Connor said.

That adds up to 45 years — several generations, in some cases — of teaching rhythms to Ames preschoolers.

Sharon Anderson says she "inherited" O'Connor when she took over running the school in 1975. She said the children really enjoy Mrs. Dorothy and look forward to her coming every other week; they think of her as a grandma or great-grandma.

This is an important role for O'Connor because she doesn't officially have that title in her family life. O'Connor and her husband, Ed, had two children. Their daughter, who is a nurse at Green Hills Health Care Center, does not have any children; their son was killed in a car-bicycle accident years ago.

"She has said often that the children at Treetop are like her grandchildren because she has no grandchildren," Anderson said. "They have filled up that space that didn't get filled another way."

In addition to teaching rhythms, O'Connor, who earned a degree in nursery and kindergarten education from Iowa State Teachers College in 1945, has helped at the preschool in other ways over the years. On the children's end-of-year field trips, she drove them to their destinations. When it was time for their picnic, she set out tablecloths on the tables at Inis Grove Park so the children could have a clean place to set their lunches.

Now, every year, the 3-year-olds at Treetop make a field trip to O'Connor's house. They meet the colorful crowd of

teddy bears in her living room, and they look at the magnets that cover her refrigerator and tell of the O'Connors' lifelong love of travel. The children have a snack with O'Connor before they go back to the preschool.

"You can't say you really do anything as far as their development," O'Connor said of all the extra things she does with the children. "It's just fun."

O'Connor's work at Treetop isn't the only way she's taken an interest in children's lives: She has been involved in Girl Scouts for 67 years. Some of the girls in her troop were there from third grade on up through high school, and she watched them grow and develop. She took the senior girls on trips across the country, including to Branson, Mo., Mackinac Island, Mich., and Savannah, Ga. She brought girls to her family's lakeside cabin and taught them to water ski — "I ran the boat," she said. And she insisted that for one evening every trip, the group would go out to a nice restaurant, and the girls were to look their best for that outing — no shorts allowed.

O'Connor still volunteers with scouting, but now she works with adults down at the scout office. "I'll never give that up until I die," she said.

She has no intentions of retiring from her teaching job at Treetop Preschool, either. She loves hearing the children call out her name when she arrives, and she loves seeing how much the returning children have changed and developed over the summer.

"I just love the little kids," she said.

Heidi Marttila-Losure can be reached at 232-2161, Ext. 352, or hlosure@amestrib.com.



O'Connor makes use of a mirror on the piano to watch the children marching behind her.

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By NANCY LEWIS

I didn't write this column. I talked it.

Let me explain. As I've written before, I loved school. Except for physical education, I did well. I got along with my teachers and most of them were very competent.

But I always had trouble with handwriting lessons. I tended to reverse letters within words, and the harder I tried not to do it, the more often it happened. Also my fine motor coordination developed slowly, so I was behind my class in that, just as my lack of gross motor coordination was a problem in gym class. My cur-

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sive writing never did become either attractive or legible. Nowadays when I need to write something with a pen or pencil, I print it.

In order to graduate from high school, I had to get a passing grade in typing class. I took this class the second semester of my sophomore year. The typing teacher was pleasant and kind, but she did have minimum standards, and it soon became evident to both of us that I was having trouble meeting them. I had a hard time memorizing the keyboard. As I became more and more tense, both my fine motor coordination and my tendency to reverse letters got even worse.

I'm not sure how I passed the course, but I think the teacher realized that I was never going to improve much and she didn't want to struggle with me for another semester!

When my husband got a computer, my typing problems should have become less severe. I could stop using large amounts of white-out and just delete my typos. But I was terrified of the computer. I would hit a wrong key, and weird things would happen. I was convinced that this machine hated me. I alternated between rage and tears.

Last winter I made a decision to try to get over these emotional problems. I now had my own computer, handed down from my husband who had purchased a new one. I had my own e-mail account. I used the computer every day. But my typing was still a problem.

Then I started reading about voice recognition software. Maybe I could "talk" my thoughts instead of typing them! I met people who used voice recognition systems. One nice lady brought her laptop over to our house

and showed me how her system worked.

So I got a new iMac, and a system called iListen. (Apple no longer sells voice recognition systems for my 5-year-old computer.) Our wonderful tech support man set it up for me.

And I don't have to type any more! I do use the keyboard for editing and for short e-mail messages, but now I can sit and talk and watch my words form on the display. It will take iListen a while to get every word right, but the process is interesting and (mostly) fun, as well as educational. And I'm no longer trying to think and type at the same time.



Nancy Lewis lives in Ames and can be reached at 233-2874 or nswlewis@hotmail.com.

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Get schooled *on* **HEALTH**

By DEBRA ATKINSON

You may have aced your physical education and nutrition classes. But Americans are failing their application. What is graded, tested, and accepted as passing, and why the failure rate?

First of all, when you first heard the information, how old were you? Too young to think it was your choice in the first place because you were just a kid? Then too busy going through the drive-through and ordering pizzas to pay much attention to what might happen some day?

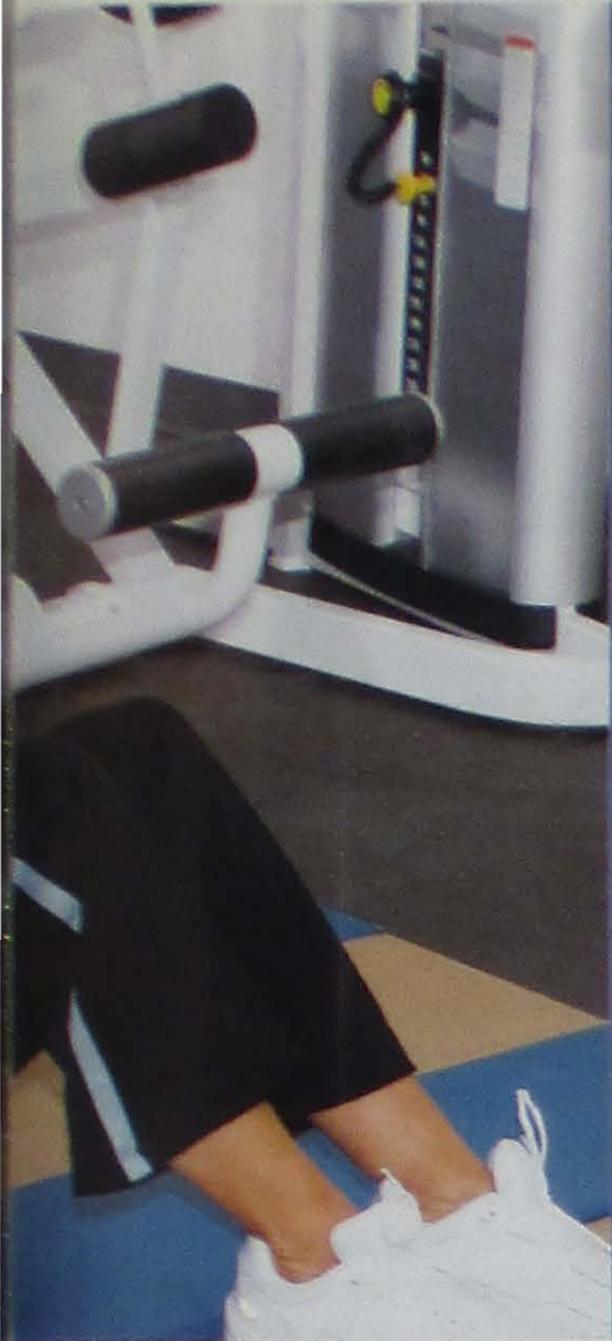
So as you aged and time lapsed between the real information and your application of it, how much were you brainwashed? How many times have you more recently heard an infomercial, read an ad or heard

a celebrity reveal how she ended up with the body you want? How much more would you like to believe that sexy story of a secret quick fix than the cold hard facts of nutrition and exercise?

It's not too late for your secondary education. Most of the things you did learn, retain and apply in your life probably came from an emotion that a teacher, the information itself, or the way it was taught evoked for you. At any age, feelings motivate change. They are also the final destination. Emotion motivates change. It also motivates the habits that make change challenging, but not impossible.

If the way you feel right now is prompting a change in your actions, you can still learn. Assess first your readiness to get it right this time.

If you feel right now like eat-



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HEALTH 101: Considering change.

"I think I am doing it right already." But you're not. Maybe because you are doing it at all you think it's enough. You don't know any other way than the way you do it and don't see a reason to change what you're doing. When you consider that you aren't feeling like you want to and are willing to consider there is another way of doing things, you have completed this course.

HEALTH 201: Attempting change.

You have a light bulb moment: There is another way to eat or exercise. When you watch someone else at the gym do the same exercise you're doing but with very different technique and question it, you've learned. When you attempt to do it differently yourself and realize it isn't right but can't yet correct it, you've learned.

HEALTH 301: Reinforcing change.

When you're doing it right but don't yet know what is changed or right about it, you're getting close to graduation. You've taken the visual and verbal cues and put them to work without knowing it completely. You need reinforcement. This is why and when a good trainer or coach will tell you you're doing a great job with X, Y, and Z, the compliment has to be qualified in order for you to repeat those good things consistently.

HEALTH 401: Mastering the art of learning.

You can correct your own mistakes. You know when you overdid dessert or cocktails and you make the adjustments. You know if you've got the seat height adjusted incorrectly so an exercise will strain vs. train. You know when you revert back to faulty movement patterns or compensate with incorrect muscles. You've achieved mastery. You'll keep on learning now because you've learned the best lesson of all: You didn't know what you didn't know.

ing right is boring, no fun, and all about deprivation, you can close the book. If you feel like exercise is torture and something only to resort to if you are overweight, out of shape, and need that kind of punishment, move on. If you are willing to consider that you have only been brainwashed to think so, then keep reading.

If you find yourself an adult having to relearn new habits to replace old ones, start with your thoughts. They affect your emotions. If you can begin thinking like an active person, like a person who thrives on healthy food choices, you'll begin changing your actions to reflect it. When one or both of these changes makes you feel better than treating yourself with anything less, you will begin to feel like it is the only way.



Debra Atkinson, senior lecturer in Health and Human Performance at Iowa State University and personal training director at Ames Racquet & Fitness Center.

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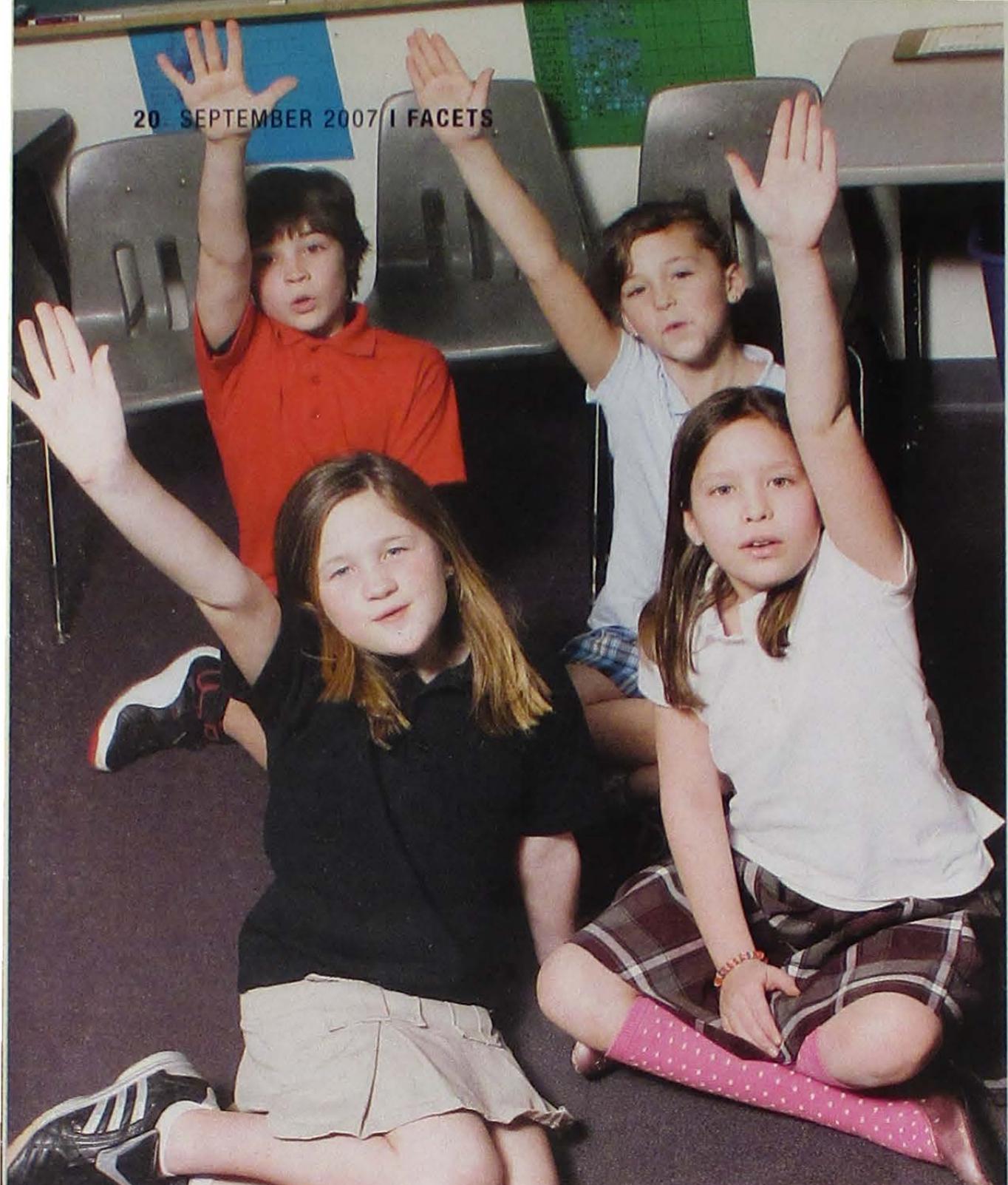
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Look, listen or move?

Help yourself help your children: Pay attention to the way they want to learn

By JOLENE PHILO

If you're the parent of more than one child, you already know this truth: Every child learns in a unique way. As a mother I watched my two kids approach learning differently. As a teacher, I faced the challenge of presenting information so all students could learn and succeed. I couldn't have met either the needs of my own kids or my students if I hadn't known how important our senses are to the learning process.

Kids gather information through their senses. Watch a few babies to see this process in action. Give them toys and what do they do? They look at them, touch them, and



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shake them. Then they put toys in their mouths to taste and smell them.

As kids grow older, they limit tasting and smelling to mealtime. By the time they're school-age, they rely upon the first three senses — sight, hearing, and touch — to process most academic learning.

While kids use all three senses, or modalities, each child favors one as a dominant modality. Visual learners prefer to use sight. Auditory learners process best by listening. Kinetic (or tactile) learners prefer touch and movement. By discovering the dominant modality, you can help your child learn more easily and be more successful with schoolwork.

How to do it

In her book "The Way They Learn," Cynthia Ulrich Tobias recommends that you find a safe place to play or study with your child. Then for at least 15 minutes, observe how your child prefers to learn. Don't make suggestions, corrections or negative comments. While observing, mark the phrases in the first column to the right that best describe your child's learning. The column with the most marks reflects the dominant modality.

Once you know how kids learn best, you can help them process information and complete their schoolwork with less hassle. Use the tips in the far column to cater to your child's dominant modality.

As you discover what methods work best for your children, tailor these ideas to their special interests and talents. Try brand new ideas you think could be effective. Ask your kids which ideas they liked, which ones felt comfortable. Based on their feedback, adjust your methods. Let them help plan learning activities.

As parents we can't always make schoolwork easy for kids. But by determining their dominant modality, we can make it easier. And the time we spend with children discovering how they learn and helping them learn is important in itself. It shows that we care about them and that we value the unique mix that makes each one different.



Jolene Philo is a freelance writer who lives in Boone. She can be reached at philo@copper.net.

Visual learners ...

- are drawn to colorful, visually stimulating objects.
- like to draw and design.
- like books with maps, charts, diagrams.
- want to see visual instructions before starting a task.
- like mazes, puzzles, legos, machines, and inventions.
- appear to be daydreaming, but are actually creating a mental picture.
- remember better if they can watch the person talking.

Auditory learners ...

- repeat information aloud to learn it.
- talk through solving a problem.
- make up stories and jokes.
- like word games.
- prefer listening to a book tape to reading.
- like radio drama.
- remember by fitting information into a rhythm or musical pattern.
- talk to themselves.
- like tape recording themselves.
- prefer talking over drawing.

Kinetic learners ...

- have a hard time sitting still very long.
- always has to have part of body in motion.
- use body language and gestures.
- learn best by being physically involved with learning task.
- like stories full of action.
- touch and feel everything.
- show rather than tell.
- often athletic and good at sports.
- are good at mimicking others.

Tips for visual learners:

- Allow them to read picture books. Don't call such books "easy" or "little kid" books.
- If a written assignment is required, encourage them to illustrate it, too.
- When reading chapter books, ask your child to stop at intervals and draw a picture of what is happening.
- Let your child write with colored pencil or on the computer.
- Use brightly colored folders for different subject areas.
- Use eye-catching planners.
- Make flash cards out of bright paper.
- Let your child make flash cards for any material that must be memorized.
- Encourage your child to make illustrations along with words or numbers on the flash cards.

Tips for auditory learners:

- Let your child read aloud when "silent reading."
- Have your child dictate a story out loud while you type it on the computer.
- Print it out and have your child share it with you.
- Read a book aloud with your child and record it. Let the child listen to it later.
- Have a book on tape available for your child to listen to while reading along in the book.
- Put facts or dates into a song, rap, or rhythm for a child to memorize.
- Encourage your child to repeat instructions out loud before following them.
- Review for tests aloud.
- Memorize material aloud.
- Purchase DVDs that set information to music. The School House Rock series is a good example.

Tips for kinetic learners:

- Give your child frequent breaks when studying.
- Let your child chew gum, walk around, or ride a stationary bike while reading.
- Associate facts or information being memorized to body movements.
- When memorizing, let your child go up and down the stairs, associating each stair with a different math fact, spelling word, or geographic location.
- Put schoolwork on a clipboard, give a time limit, and allow your child to complete the work "on the run."
- Use as many hands-on activities and experiments as possible.
- Give your child art projects (sidewalk chalk, murals, different textures) where information can be recorded.
- Take your child on nature walks.
- Act out stories.

BROWN BAG Savory

By JOLENE PHILO

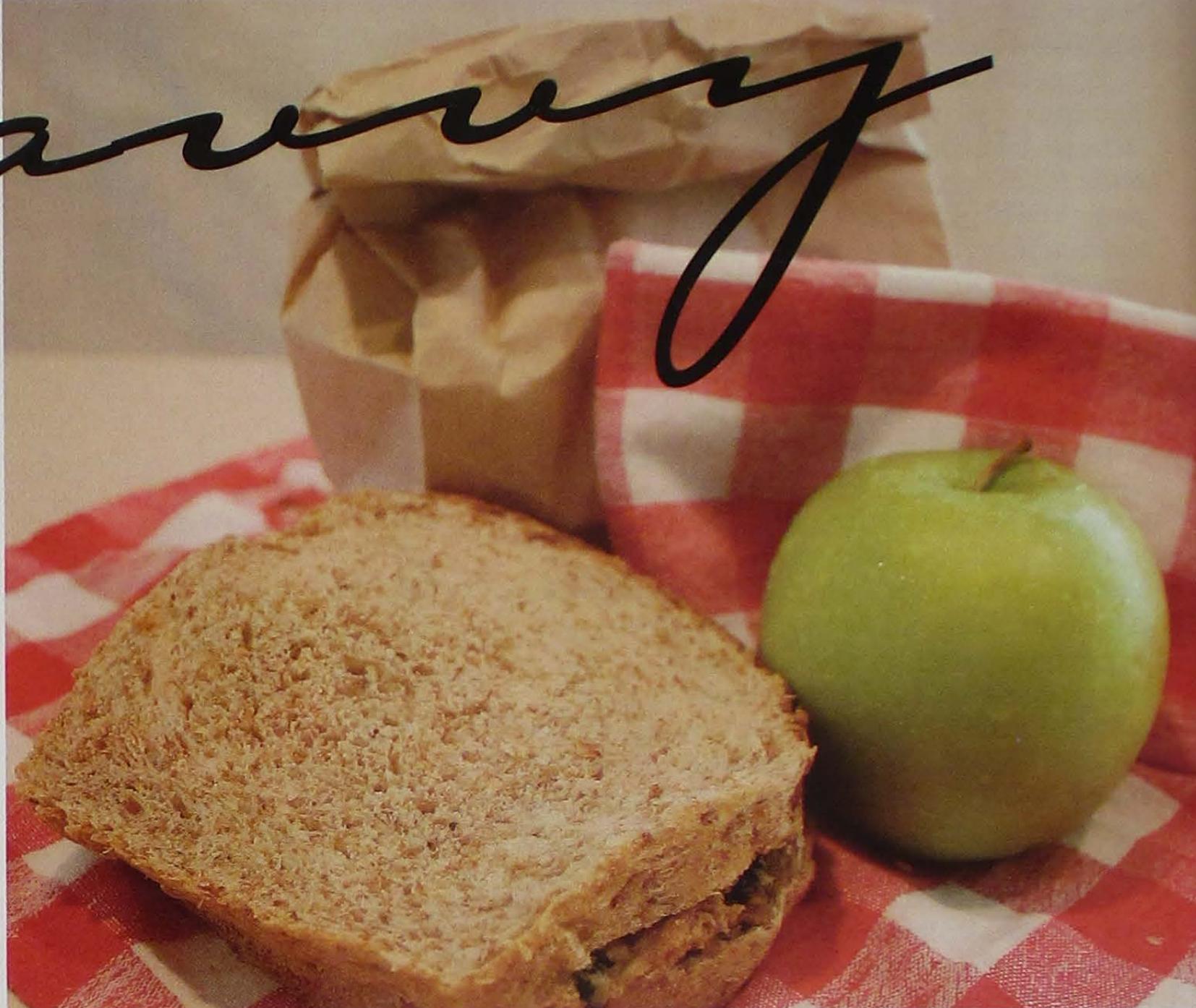
If the thought of preparing a sack lunch fills you with dread, join the crowd.

Whether the lunch to be packed is for a picky-eater kid or a penny-pinching adult, finding fresh recipes to replace stale, brown bag stand-bys becomes a bigger challenge every day.

These recipes are guaranteed to spice up brown bag lunches at school or work.



Jolene Philo is a freelance writer who lives in Boone. She can be reached at philo@copper.net.



Tomato-Basil Pizza

12-inch purchased pizza crust
1 medium tomato or 1 cup cherry tomatoes, thinly sliced
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
1 tablespoon fresh, chopped basil
1/4 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Spread cheese over pizza crust. Arrange tomato slices on top of cheese. Bake for 20 minutes until cheese is golden-brown. Remove from oven. Dust with pepper and sprinkle basil on top. Cut into eight pieces. When cool, wrap the slices in plastic wrap and refrigerate. Pack in lunch box beside an ice pack. The slices are good heated in the microwave or cold.

Updated Peanut Butter Sandwiches

1/2 cup peanut butter
1/4 cup shredded baby carrots
2 tablespoons sunflower nuts or chopped nuts (such as almonds, peanuts or walnuts)
3 tablespoons dried fruit (such as dry cherries, blueberries or currants)
8 slices whole wheat bread

In small bowl, combine peanut butter, carrot, nuts, dried fruit and honey. Blend well. Spread on bread to make sandwiches and slip into sandwich bags.

Find lunch ideas online

Check out these web pages for more fresh brown bag ideas:

- <http://busycooks.about.com> - Scroll down and click the "Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner" link on the left hand side of the page. Scroll down to the middle of the new page and click on "Brown Bag Lunch Recipes."
- www.fabulousfoods.com/features/brnbg/brnbg.html - This page has recipes to satisfy kids and adults.
- <http://www.globalgourmet.com/food/egg/egg0997/25tips.html> - You'll find 25 tips for better brown bag lunches.

And for even more fresh ideas, Google "brown bag lunches" to find recipes for every day of the week.

MEET A faceted woman



Hira and her doctoral student, who is now vice chancellor at Kenyatta University.

You have \$1,000 to spend on yourself:

I would use the money toward a trip to see fall colors in Maine.



Hira meets Bill Clinton jogging on the beach.

Be our featured reader: Request a questionnaire so we can consider you for a future Faceted Woman column. Contact: karen@mymorethanmoney.net



Colleagues in Turkey: Hira was a keynote speaker at a conference.

TAHIRA K. HIRA

ISU professor and executive assistant to the president

Tahira's favorite food is Lamb Karrahi, her simplest pleasure is an evening walk with her husband, and she never leaves home without some kind of ID.

Craziest fashion you ever wore? Bell bottoms.

Your favorite motto: "There is no free lunch."

What makes you happy? When I help solve a problem.

What makes you laugh? Voices of laughing children.

What do you crave? Bing cherries.

Your best tip for looking and feeling great: Clear conscience and a good night's sleep.

What financial advice would you give other women? Live within your means and be responsible for your financial well-being.

Favorite wardrobe staple: A nice watch.

What makes you feel confident? Knowing that I have done my very best no matter what I was doing.

If you knew then what you know now, what would you have done different? Be more patient, and more understanding.

How do you take care of yourself financially? Live within my means and be prepared for unexpected and long-term needs.

I am thankful for: The list is very long; on the top of list is my husband and good health.

When I am an old lady I will: I will never be an old lady. I might have many birthdays, but I will never be old.



con·fi·dent

adj. 1. sure of oneself; having no uncertainty about one's own abilities, correctness, successfulness, etc.; excessively bold



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